

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PARIS 000744

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SUBJECT: ISRAELI IO A/S OUTLINES MULTILATERAL PRIORITIES,
CASTIGATES NEGATIVE FRENCH UN ROLE

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Josiah B. Rosenblatt. Reas
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11. (C) Summary: Israeli MFA IO A/S-Equivalent Aharon Leshno Yaar briefed Political Minister-Counselor January 26 on his meetings with French counterparts, stressing his warning to the GoF against new initiatives on Shebaa farms. Yaar confided Israel was also interested in organizing a new coordinating mechanism with Lebanon that would involve a third party distinct from UNIFIL, but he had steered clear of the topic with the French. Yaar indicated Israel has raised with DPKO U/SYG Guehenno the possible deployment of an Israeli police unit in a UN operation sometime in 2006, possibly in Haiti. On multilateral issues, Yaar judged French UN positions the worst of any EU member for Israeli interests, zeroing in on French resistance to any chance in WEOG participation for Israel. Yaar nonetheless believed times were propitious for Israel to seize the initiative and push for UNGA votes on its multilateral priorities. End Summary.

12. (C) Visiting Israeli MFA IO A/S-Equivalent Aharon Leshno Yaar called on Political Minister-Counselor January 26 to backbrief on his meetings with French counterparts. While the chief purpose of Yaar's visit was to meet with recently appointed MFA IO A/S-Equivalent Sylvie Bermann, Yaar also called on Elysee Middle East/Americas advisor Dominique Boche and MFA NEA PDAS-Equivalent Gilles Bonnaud. (Comment: Local Israeli embassy counterparts have described Boche, who served previously as French DCM in Tel Aviv, as the most Israel-friendly of senior GoF Middle East policy-makers in Paris. End comment.) Poloff and Israeli Embassy Counselor Oren Bar-El accompanied.

Cautions France on Shebaa Farms

13. (C) Yaar reported he had issued a direct warning to the French not to spring surprises regarding the Shebaa farms after Boche indicated the French were amenable to a possible Syrian/Lebanese initiative for expeditious demarcation. With Israeli general elections now in train, Yaar explained, any such initiative would become a political football, and could heap blame on the current GoI for contemplating "another withdrawal" without concessions in return.

Looking Beyond UNIFIL

14. (C) Yaar said Israel was examining the viability of a new coordinating mechanism with Lebanon that would involve a third party distinct from UNIFIL. It would handle a range of situations and issues, e.g. exchanges of bodies, and eventually expand to address water sources and other issues. Yaar speculated that Lebanese President Siniora might be able to make use of such a mechanism to sidestep Hezbollah. The initiative however was on hold due to Sharon's hospitalization. Yaar said the notion had not been broached with the French and that Israel would not advance it without USG concurrence.

15. (C) Concerning UNIFIL and the (at the time) draft SCR, Yaar praised the "excellent" cooperation Israel enjoyed in New York and Washington. He restated Israeli misgivings about how UNIFIL provided Lebanon with a ready excuse to avoid deployment of security forces to southern Lebanon. However, he stated emphatically that Israel was not calling for the end of UNIFIL -- "certainly not overnight" in any event -- though, for tactical reasons, there was occasional utility in giving that impression. Yaar expressed satisfaction that the draft SCR recognized UNIFIL's interim nature, which he termed an important nuance.

France a "Negative Player" on IO/UN Affairs

16. (C) On multilateral issues, Yaar judged French UN positions the worst for Israeli interests of any EU member, zeroing in on French resistance to WEOG participation for Israel. Despite improvement in French-Israeli bilateral relations in 2005, Yaar assessed that France remained "a

negative player" in the UN. When there is a split vote on UN matters, France was always on the wrong side, he claimed, expressing deep frustration and worry that French opposition was somehow "philosophical." He was particularly scathing with regard to the French stand on Israel's full participation in WEOG, an objective that he had sold to Sharon as a multilateral priority. France, Yaar said, had offered Israel a "humiliating" compromise of membership in WIPO (not directly a WEOG body) and the CND, which are marginal organizations in Yaar's view. Should France change its position to be supportive of the Israeli WEOG bid, thereby aligning Paris with London and Berlin, the effect would be decisive, Yaar said, commenting that French opposition provides cover to other recalcitrant European states. Yaar said he considered Czech Republic to be Israel's best friend in Europe "righteous people, who do things for us we don't even ask for", along with Slovakia and Hungary, followed by Germany and Denmark. Italy was also helpful, yet would be less so should Berlusconi lose power.

Interactions with French IO

17. (C) Yaar said his main purpose in France was to get to know recently appointed IO A/S-Equivalent Sylvie Bermann. During their three-hour meeting, Bermann had upbraided Yaar for Israel's solidarity with the United States on the Cultural Diversity treaty at UNESCO. France just could not believe, Yaar declared, that Israel could have reached its position "of its own free will." Yaar retorted to Bermann that only the U.S. is there for Israel when it counts. He offered to continue the discussion of the treaty at another occasion "on a professional level," examining the issue on its merits. Yaar told Political Minister Counselor that he had personally taken the decision -- without consulting within the MFA -- to oppose the treaty in response to the strong-arm approach of Bermann's predecessor, former IO A/S-Equivalent Ripert, who is now the French representative to the UN in Geneva. Meeting Yaar in September on the margins of the UNGA, Ripert threatened to block the Israeli candidate to the World Heritage Committee unless Israel supported the cultural diversity treaty.

18. (C) Yaar thought France was thinking along similar lines to the U.S. regarding the selection of the next Secretary General. Moreover, France hoped to draw out the selection process. He said Bermann indicated that France was not committed to an Asian candidate, but if a choice were necessary now, France would back the South Korean. Israel, for its part, liked Kwasniewski.

Rundown on Multilateral Priorities

19. (C) WEOG: With Sharon incapacitated, Yaar indicated the Israeli WEOG campaign was in stasis, as acting PM Olmert was unfamiliar with the issue. Yaar planned a thorough briefing for the interim FM in mid-February, before her visit to New York.

110. (C) Anti-Israel Mandates: Despite extensive lobbying against a range of anti-Israel GA resolutions, Yaar conceded the efforts had failed miserably. He would now focus on three GA resolutions -- those mandating the UN Palestine Division and the two special committees. To that end, Yaar indicated Israel would consider sweeteners, as appropriate, in the UN context for the Palestine Authority, offering to support their interests where possible. Yaar noted the Canadians had offered to propose a new "positive" resolution, which Yaar said Israel could back if and only if it were to supersede the traditional negative resolutions.

111. (C) Yaar was concerned that the UN Secretariat was readying the launch of a registrar for damages for Palestinians after delaying action since its inception through a July 2004 emergency UNGA session, which he noted was still on-going. Since Israel refused cooperation, the UN wanted to establish a reparations office in Amman. Yaar predicted the initiative would not benefit the Palestinians, "not by one penny." A major drawback was the lack of any verification or cooperation mechanisms, he judged. Yaar said he had discussed the issue with Ambassador Bolton.

112. (C) Yaar noted Israel's relations with UN special rapporteurs had improved dramatically in recent years. A notable exception however was the South African who handles Palestinian territories. (NFI) Israel would have no dealings with him, while yet granting access to the territories, because he called for a South-African-style solution, which, Yaar said, would mean "the abolition of the Jewish state."

113. (C) Israel hoped to deploy forces under the UN flag at some time in 2006, Yaar said. An offer of a police unit was under discussion with U/SYG Guehenno. Yaar suggested

MINUSTAH was a possible mission, adding that Israel had participated in UN operations in Haiti in the 90's.

Seizing the Initiative, Multilaterally

¶14. (C) Yaar expressed his conviction that circumstances were propitious for Israeli multilateral initiatives. He pointed to three recent developments as encouraging. First, the adoption of the additional Geneva protocol permitting the Red Diamond logo alongside the Red Cross and Red Crescent at Geneva, which he attributed to the positive impact of the Gaza withdrawal, as well as to decisive U.S. pressure thanks to the U.S. Red Cross threat otherwise to withhold funds from the ICRC. There was general exasperation, he believed, with Syrian objections and overall "less fear of the Arabs generally." As an aside, Yaar remarked that the UK Presidency, as represented in Geneva, was "disastrous." Second, Yaar pointed to the UNGA resolution for a special session in remembrance of the Holocaust, which had been adopted in 2004 with 152 votes, far exceeding the minimum 96 votes necessary. Yaar was gratified that there were Holocaust remembrance ceremonies underway at UN facilities worldwide. Third, Yaar claimed as a victory the adoption of an Israeli amendment in a recent UNGA resolution -- a breakthrough achievement, and a first for Israel in over 50 years by Yaar's calculations. He admitted this amendment (to a resolution on desertification) was minor, merely welcoming a conference to take place on Israeli soil. Tempering Yaar's exultation however was his disappointment at the subsequent adoption of language condemning Israel for uprooting trees in the disputed territories, which Syria proposed in retaliation for the Israeli success. Yaar took comfort in the fact that the Syrian amendment passed by only a narrow margin; however, once again, France had not been helpful, he pointed out, abstaining on the Syrian amendment rather than voting against.

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